

of Human Rights that promote freedom, justice, and peace all around the world.

We live at a time when our most deeply held ideals are ascendant, but this hopeful trend toward freedom and democracy is neither inevitable nor irreversible, nor has it extended to the real lives of hundreds of millions of people all across the globe. While we seek to engage all nations on terms of good will, we must continue to stand up for the proposition that all people, without regard to their gender, their nationality, their race, their ethnic group or their religion, should have a chance to live up to their potential.

I want to say again how gratified I am that there are people like these six women alive and well and at work in the world, people like so many of you. It is a constant source of inspiration to me. I want to say again how grateful I am to the First Lady for going across the world to raise our concerns about this and bringing back to me the knowledge of the work that has been done and what still can be done on behalf of women and girls.

As I sign this proclamation marking International Human Rights Day, I ask you all to remember not just that women's rights or human rights but that the defense and the promotion of human rights are the responsibilities of all of us.

Thank you.

[At this point, the President signed Proclamation 6964—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week.]

The President. Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Geraldine Ferraro, former Vice Presidential candidate, and Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky, Alternate Representative to the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

Proclamation 6964—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week

December 10, 1996

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

When America's founders crafted the Constitution and Bill of Rights more than two centuries ago, they not only created a blueprint for the conduct of American government, but they also gave expression to a vision of human dignity that inspires people to this day the world over. Our Nation's commitment to the freedoms enumerated in the Bill of Rights—among them freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, and the right to due process and a fair trial—serves as a beacon of hope to oppressed peoples everywhere.

Americans continue to work to improve our application of equality under the law for all our own citizens, as we believe that freedom and justice are the birthright of humankind. We are also working daily to foster and promote the growth of these rights in other countries. Indeed, the championing of democracy and human rights serves as a cornerstone of my Administration's foreign policy.

As we observe Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we can take satisfaction in our progress in advancing human rights around the world in the past decade. In fact, more than half the people in the world now live under democratic political systems. Even in countries still struggling to establish basic human rights and freedoms, we are seeing some progress. And brave reformers such as Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma continue to press their rightful demand for freedom.

It is also encouraging that, with the growth and development of the human rights movement, there has been greater awareness and appreciation that women's rights are human rights.

Just over a year ago, representatives from 189 countries met in Beijing at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. That historic gathering focused the attention of the world on women's rights and needs. Now, we are beginning to see some progress. In many countries, increasing numbers of women are contesting and attaining public office and playing a vital role in shaping the political agenda. In Romania, women gathered from around Central and Eastern Europe to promote the goals of the Beijing women's conference. Thailand has passed a new anti-prostitution law. Women in Namibia are now afforded equal rights with men in marriage. Chile has made a serious commitment to expanding educational opportunities for girls. And in the United States, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, that I signed into law in September of 1994, reflects our profound national commitment to ending abuse against women. These are just a few hopeful signs of improvement in global respect for women's rights, and it is fitting that we celebrate them.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 10, 1996, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 1996, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 1996, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate these observances with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that demonstrate our national commitment to the Constitution and the promotion of human rights for all people.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 11, 1996]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 12.

Remarks on the Appointment of Evelyn Lieberman as Director of the Voice of America and an Exchange With Reporters

December 10, 1996

The President. Fifty-four years ago, just a few months after the United States entered World War II, the Voice of America went on the air with these words: "The news may be good. The news may be bad. We shall tell you the truth." VOA lit Europe's darkest night with a bright spotlight of truth and then became a key weapon in the war of ideas we waged and won against communism.

Today, VOA beams America's voices to nearly 100 million listeners in every corner of our planet every week. The news it delivers—reliable, authoritative, objective—is more important than ever. There are millions and millions and millions of people around the world who are hungry, indeed starved, for accurate information still and for the insights it gives them on how they can organize themselves to change their own lives for the better.

Under Geoff Cowan's extraordinary leadership, the VOA has developed innovative new shows that examine how institutions of democracy and free markets work. It has moved from what Director Cowan calls monolog to dialog, with call-in programs in a dozen languages. We were just talking before we came in about a call-in program that the First Lady did where she got calls from all over the world, including some surprising places. The VOA has increased coverage of human rights issues. It has used the best available technology, like satellites, to deliver better programming to more people.

I thank Geoff, who has been my friend for many years now, for so ably carrying on a family tradition. His father, Louis Cowan, was the VOA's second director. And most of all, I thank him for his service to our Nation and to the community of nations.

All around the world new democracies we have worked so hard to support are taking root. But they remain fragile, and we must nurture and defend them. The free flow of information is the lifeblood of democracy. And it is very important that the mission of the VOA continue.